

Standing Room Only at First Health Agency Town Hall

By Kathleen Piché, L.C.S.W., Public Affairs Director



2016 has started with many changes. Perhaps the most obvious and concerning to staff is the integration of the Los Angeles County Public Health, Health Services and Mental Health departments. All three departments are now under an umbrella agency entitled the "Health Agency." It is hoped that having the Health Agency over the three departments will help to streamline services in a more cost-effective manner, with each department retaining separate directors and budgets.

Staff from the three departments got an opportunity to ask questions about what will happen under the Health Agency during a live Town Hall meeting at the Health Services and Public Health Building Auditorium, 313 N. Figueroa St, on March 2nd, 2016, from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm, with leaders from all three agencies present, as well as County union representatives.



From left to right: Gavin Koon, Bob Schoonover, Jeffrey Gunzenhauser, Cynthia Harding, Mitch Katz, Robin Kay, Stuart Bussey, Theodora McKenna, and Alina Mendizabal.

Mitch Katz, M.D., Health Agency Director, answered questions about the timeline of hiring permanent directors for DMH and DPH. The bulletin for the DMH Director position has been posted and is expected to close later this month. Following the appointment of a DMH Director, the same process will be followed to find a director for DPH. Dr. Katz said that the LA County Board of Supervisors will make the final decision on who will be selected for both directorships. Dr. Katz also said that no services will be closed or integrated right now.

Robin Kay, Ph.D., DMH Acting Director talked about creating an agency without walls, connecting staff and services to communities in a seamless fashion. Other panelists included: Cynthia Harding, MPH, Interim Director Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Jeffrey Gunzenhauser, MD, MPH, Interim Health Officer of LA County.

Alina Mendizabal from SEIU 721 introduced and moderated the panel. Additional Union representatives that served as panelists included: Theodora McKenna; Stuart Bussey, MD, JD, UAPD President; Bob Schoonover, SEIU 721 President; and Gavin Koon, IUOE Business Representative.

The C3 program and Olive View Urgent Care Programs were acknowledged as integrated programs that are already up and running.



Patricia Russell on the mic during the live Q & A session with panelists.

On a technical note, DHS and DPH set up connections with Cisco Conference endpoints to about a dozen conference rooms (mostly DHS), and John Flynn, DMH Communications Analyst, CIOB, linked all DMH sites and several DPH sites using WebEx and a telephone conference line. DHS and DPH had about 12 sites connected, and DMH had 177 unique sites connected. DMH/DPH had well over 300 people on the line. The number of viewers totaled over 750.

The video recording will soon be on our DMH intranet Town Hall site: <http://dmhhqportal1/sites/th/default.aspx>.